

Questionnaire on Community Health and Community Development for Candidates for Mayor of Boston

Responses of Felix Arroyo

- 1. Community Health and Racial Inequities:** *Mayor Menino has been an effective advocate for reducing racial and ethnic health inequities. What will you do to build on that work?*

Your health and the safety and cleanliness of your environment should not be determined by race, nationality or income level. It is essential that we work to improve the health and sustainability of all our city's vibrant, diverse communities. Boston is home to the best hospitals and community health centers. We must ensure that all of Boston's residents have access to these facilities as well as promote wellness programs as the key to good health. I will make it a priority, as Mayor, to give communities and residents throughout the city the tools and resources to provide for their mental and physical well-being. Additionally, I have also developed a plan to improve our environment, a matter of basic equity, to help bridge the divide so that communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are not disproportionately affected by environmental health burdens.

- 2. Community Resilience:** *What would you do to develop systems and skills that increase the resilience of residents in neighborhoods experiencing high rates of violence, substance abuse, suicide and other community traumas?*

The most violent thing that happens in our communities is poverty. I believe we must focus on ending the cycle of poverty and that should drive the way we develop programs in our city. Community centers are an essential part of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods and I believe we need to ensure that they receive the necessary funding in order to provide programming and activities that help heal communities experiencing traumas such as high rates of violence, suicide and substance abuse. We must recognize that trauma is *not* a localized or brief event or moment, but rather an ongoing dilemma that may affect individuals and communities for many years. Our Community Center programming should reflect this fact, by offer enduring support for those communities in distress. I also believe we must work with our community partners and organizations already doing the work to increase the resilience of residents and provide them with the support they need to serve our community's needs.

3. Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence: *What is one thing that you, as Mayor, think is the most important way to decrease domestic/Intimate partner abuse, which accounts for a significant portion of assaults in Boston?*

As a City Councilor, I have been proud to take the White Ribbon Pledge, promising to be part of the solution to end violence against women. As Mayor, I will be proud to continue to pledge to be part of the solution and to encourage participation of men in leadership positions to raise awareness. We must focus on education, but also on treatment for survivors of violence as well. One aspect of domestic violence that is often ignored is the profound effect that domestic and intimate partner violence has on children and young people, who are far more likely to perpetuate similar violence later in life if exposed to it at a young age. Community center rehabilitation and outreach programming should take into account the generational consequences of these types of violence by offering safe spaces for families, especially women and children, to come together and heal the wounds that domestic abuse creates. Mentoring programs for both mothers and their children exposed to domestic violence, for example, should play an integral role in this process.

4. Education:

4.a. *Given the importance of good early childhood care and education as a predictor for lifelong health, what will you do to increase the number of children, particularly in communities of color, in such education programs and enhance the quality of those programs?*

Every child deserves a quality education and we must focus all of the resources we have on our public school system and on closing the achievement gap. We need to invest in early education because we know that until the third grade, children are learning to read and from the third grade on they are reading to learn. Early education programs are crucial not only for health, but for success in later education and employment. For that reason, I will create partnerships between health centers, community centers, Boston Public Schools, universities and libraries to expand and enrich these programs.

4.b. *What is the most important goal you will tell your new BPS Superintendent to work towards and why?*

Closing the achievement gap is the civil rights issue of our time. In our public schools, we can increase access to early childhood education, give our schools more time to teach and our students more time to learn, give teachers the resources they need, and implement curricula that is both culturally competent and responsive to the demands placed on students when they enter the workforce. Ensuring that all students enrolled in Boston Public Schools have the necessary skills to succeed and to be prepared for today's world should be our top priority. As Mayor, I

will work with our BPS Superintendent to implement these policy proposals that will move us towards closing the achievement gap once and for all.

5. Environmental Issues: *What additional measures will you take to improve the air quality, particularly in neighborhoods with industrial sites, waste transfer sites, and highways?*

The next Mayor must take immediate steps to curb the level of diesel pollution in Boston. Air pollution as a result of diesel emissions has deleterious effects on human health, animal life, urban agriculture, personal property, and limits citizen activities out in the community; in addition, it is one of the primary causes of the asthma epidemic throughout Boston. As Mayor, I will implement the Diesel Emission Reduction Ordinance (DERO) to ensure that trucks that cause diesel pollution are retrofitted or replaced to improve the quality of the air we breathe.

6. Gambling: *In what ways will you ensure that mitigation money from an East Boston casino benefit the residents of East Boston and the City of Boston?*

Everyone deserves a voice in the direction of the city, especially those who are most impacted by the decision at hand. Residents of East Boston should be a part of the process in determining their own needs and the community agreement should be clear about bringing money back into the community and hiring people from East Boston. To further ensure that the plan meets the needs of the community, it will be voted on by residents.

7. Health Care Access: *What will you do to ensure that the large non-English speaking population has access to and receives culturally appropriate high quality health care?*

I believe everyone should be able to see a doctor when they are sick and if we are truly committed to universal access to high quality health care, we must also ensure that our health care system is culturally competent. Offering multi-lingual and cultural competent services in every City department to meet the needs of residents who speak different languages is a priority of mine. As Mayor, I will also encourage educational institutions and work force development agencies to attract and train health workers from non-English speaking communities in Boston so that we have health care staff that can serve those who do not speak English.

8. HIV/AIDS: Overall, Boston and MA has significantly reduced the rate of new HIV infections, except in communities of color. How will you work to address this epidemic among Black and Latino communities, including the LGBT members of those communities?

Addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Boston's communities of color and LGBT communities will not only require working closely with health care professionals, but also effectively coordinating efforts with community organizations. While we have seen tremendous progress in lowering the HIV/AIDS rates, we still find communities of color disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. As Mayor, I will work closely with lead community organizations in Boston's Black and Latino communities, particularly those that represent and support LGBT members of these communities, to better educate about prevention and treatment and offer informational materials translated into different languages.

9. Homelessness: What will your administration do differently to address the issue of homelessness, particularly for families with children?

Everyone deserves a place to live. We must address the causes of homelessness and how it affects people in many different ways. Homelessness prevention must take into account the unique needs of each individual, whether it is addiction, poverty, or domestic abuse. As Mayor, I will work with municipal agencies that provide services and support for homeless women in order to better coordinate their efforts as well as expand training and workforce development programs for women living in shelters. I would also strongly support policies that ensure that homeless women are sheltered and ultimately housed in areas where they have support systems, such as extended families or friends, and work to ensure that homeless women with children are sheltered near schools. By not just focusing on emergency shelters, but an entire continuum of housing solutions, we can help re-integrate our homeless population into a healthy and sustainable living situation.

10. Housing:

10.a. What creative plans do you have for addressing the need for more housing that is affordable for working families who do not qualify for subsidized housing but cannot afford market rate housing by increasing resources through linkage, inclusionary development and other tools?

When my parents moved to Boston with my older sister, they needed an affordable place to live and they found that in Villa Victoria in the South End. From there, they were able to buy a home in Hyde Park and raise our family there. Everyone deserves a place to live and we must remain committed to affordable housing. As a city government, we must provide incentives for

developers to build affordable housing and encourage mixed use development that includes market rate, moderate rate, and affordable units. We can help accomplish this by increasing the cash-out payments for developers who do not provide on-site affordable units.

Another crucial step in increasing the availability of affordable housing is rethinking the term “affordable”, which is currently determined using income data from the Greater Boston area, inflating median income figures. If elected, I would move to reexamine this formula so that affordable housing more effectively meets the needs of extremely low income households and families. I would also support the building of housing of different sizes, so that households of different sizes can live in Boston. A “one size fits all” approach to housing ignores the diversity of families that call Boston their home.

10.b. Would you be willing to implement a health-based housing standard for all rehab investments made by the City that ensures the creation of healthier housing by addressing home-based environmental health hazards and energy efficiency to reduce the high costs of asthma, lead poisoning, trip & fall injuries and energy in low to moderate income homes?

As a life long asthmatic, this issue is personal to me. We must ensure our housing standards ensure all residents have healthy living. Everyone deserves to live in a stable, healthy and safe home and we should have health standards around all housing.

11. Jobs and Youth: How will you improve the opportunities for Boston youth to be employed in the health, science, education, and social services sector which account for one third of Boston’s jobs?

As a youth sports coach, I have a true appreciation for the benefits of investing in our youth; so, I have made our city’s youth one of my top priorities. Working with a Youth Task Force I created of over 30 youth organizations, we have led the fight to save thousands of summer jobs for young people, brought over 200 teenagers together to develop a “Boston Youth Agenda,” and continued to work to promote the overall well being of youth throughout the city of Boston. An investment in our youth is an investment in our future. Every young person in our city should know that they are valued, that we expect them to succeed, and we must invest in them to create those opportunities.

We must work together to maximize the number of job opportunities for young people in the summer and for the whole year because a meaningful job is not only an opportunity to earn a paycheck, but the chance to gain valuable professional experience and be able to financially contribute to their families. We also should expand quality after-school initiatives to give every young person the opportunity to develop skills in a positive environment and support our

libraries because when we support these valuable community resources, we also support our youth, our families and our elderly community.

12. Neighborhood Economic Development and Planning: *What specific changes in zoning, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and development processes will you advocate for in Boston's lower socioeconomic status neighborhoods that will be responsive to local input and spur economic improvement and jobs?*

We must also separate the planning board from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and ensure that community input is a part of that plan. As Mayor, I will ensure that the community leads planning and planning leads development in our city.

Boston is a prosperous city and I believe all of our neighborhoods should share in that prosperity. I have developed a plan called "Invest in Boston" to help spur our local economy and help ensure that we invest in all communities. Boston has over a billion dollars in deposits in various banks, yet we do not know that these banks invest at all in any of our neighborhoods. As Mayor, I will implement my "Invest in Boston" legislation that will ensure that we only do business with banks that are lending to small businesses, to qualified homebuyers, to development projects, and that are helping solve our foreclosure crisis. By implementing this plan, we will help create jobs, promote home ownership, and create more stable communities.

13. Substance Use and Prevention: *How would you improve the provision of prevention of and treatment for substance abuse?*

Substance abuse is often considered the problem of an individual, but it is also a problem that affects entire communities. As Mayor, I will not only promote medical care and support for individuals struggling with substance abuse problems, but also endorse counseling programs for families and a community awareness and outreach campaign to help community members identify signs of substance abuse and help those suffering with substance abuse problems find the resources they need to overcome their illness.

14. Transportation: *Given the MBTA's fiscal problems, how would you improve access to public transportation, particularly in communities of color and low-income neighborhoods?*

We rely on four basic modes of transportation--the car, public transportation, biking, and walking--and we need to make sure that each of those choices is accessible to all of Boston's residents in an equitable and safe way. I understand that investment in our transportation infrastructure that is inclusive of these four choices is key to our growth. Now is the time to implement solutions that will improve our transportation infrastructure for the long term. We

need a progressive revenue plan that does not place the hardship on those that can least afford it. As Mayor, I will work with the Governor and the residents of Boston to ensure that we implement reforms and make much-needed investments transportation in a fair and just way, that provide better and more reliable service and extend hours of operation, while ensuring to support senior specific transportation like the Ride and the Senior Shuttle.

15. Violence Prevention/Public Safety: *What changes will you make to dramatically reduce the amount of violence in communities of color?*

Safe and secure neighborhoods are key to a strong city. As Mayor, I will prioritize public safety for all constituencies and ensure that our police, fire, EMS and street workers receive the funding they need to do their jobs effectively. As Bostonians, we are blessed to have great public safety personnel and committed neighborhood associations. By working together, fostering relationships and building community, we can ensure that all our streets are safe. Community policing is also an essential component to creating safe neighborhoods and we will ensure that we have police walking the beat and bicycling in all of our neighborhoods. Better trust and communication between public safety officers and community members, including homeless women, is crucial. However, street violence prevention, in order to be effective, must also be attuned to lasting trauma.